

THE
OCCULT
SIGNIFICANCE OF
BLOOD

RUDOLF STEINER

RUDOLF STEINER PRESS

Some fundamental works by Rudolf Steiner:

Occult Science—an Outline

Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment

Theosophy: an Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge of the World and the Destination of Man

Christianity as Mystical Fact and the Mysteries of Antiquity

The Evolution of Consciousness

Reincarnation and Karma. Their Significance in modern Culture

The Spiritual Guidance of Man and of Mankind

Anthroposophy: an Introduction

The Philosophy of Freedom

Festivals and their Meaning. Four volumes: *Easter, Ascension and Pentecost, Michaelmas, Christmas*

All the published works of Rudolf Steiner in English translation and in the original German, catalogues, and the works of other authors on Anthroposophy, can be obtained from Rudolf Steiner Press and Bookshop 35, Park Road, London, N.W.1.

RUDOLF STEINER

THE
OCCULT
SIGNIFICANCE OF
BLOOD

A public lecture given in Berlin,
25th October, 1906

RUDOLF STEINER PRESS

*First English Edition 1912
Second English Edition 1926
Third Edition (revised by O.B.) 1967*

Translated from a shorthand report unrevised by the lecturer. The text of this lecture is included in the volume of the Complete Edition of the works of Rudolf Steiner, entitled: *Die Erkenntnis des Übersinnlichen in unserer Zeit und deren Bedeutung für das heutige Leben* (No. 55 in the Bibliographical Survey, 1961, containing the texts of thirteen lectures given during 1906 and 1907).

Publication of this English edition of the following lecture is by permission of the *Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung*, Dornach, Switzerland.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

© 1967 Rudolf Steiner Press, London
Printed by The Garden City Press Ltd., Letchworth, Herts.

SBN 85440 186 5

THE OCCULT SIGNIFICANCE OF BLOOD

Blood is a very singular fluid—Mephistopheles in Faust

IN GOETHE's great work we are shown how Faust, the representative of the highest human endeavour, enters into a pact with the Powers of Evil, represented by Mephistopheles, the emissary of hell. Faust is to strike a bargain with Mephistopheles and the contract must be signed with his own blood. To begin with, Faust regards it as a jest. But at this juncture Mephistopheles utters the sentence which without doubt Goethe intended should be taken very seriously: "Blood is a very singular fluid."

The so-called commentators have adopted an extraordinary attitude towards this line in *Faust*. You are certainly well aware that the literature dealing with Goethe's version of the legend is so voluminous that whole libraries might be filled with it. Naturally, I cannot make it my business to expatiate on what the different commentators have said about this particular line; but none of the interpretations throw much more light on it than that of Professor Minor, one of the most recent commentators. He, like others, treats it as though it were an ironical remark made by Mephistopheles and makes the following very curious comment—listen to exactly what he says and you may well be astonished at the strange conclusions which commentators on Goethe are capable of drawing. Professor Minor remarks that "the devil is the enemy of the blood", and he points out that as the blood is the

sustainer and preserver of life, the devil, who is the enemy of the human race, must also be the enemy of the blood. He then—quite rightly—draws attention to the fact that even in the oldest versions of the Faust Legend, and indeed in legends generally, blood always plays the same role.

In an old book on Faust it is clearly described how Faust makes a slight cut in his left hand with a small penknife, and how then, as he takes the pen to sign the agreement, the blood from the cut forms the words: “O man, escape!” All this is correct; but now comes the remark that the devil is an enemy of the blood and that the reason why he insists that the signature shall be written in blood is precisely because he is hostile to the blood. Can you imagine anyone desiring to possess the very thing he abhors? The only reasonable explanation—not only of the sentence from Goethe, but also of the main legend and all the earlier Faust lore—is that the devil regarded the blood as of particular importance and that it was by no means a matter of indifference to him whether the pact was signed in ordinary ink, or in blood.

We can only assume here that the representative of the Powers of Evil is convinced he will have Faust more completely under his control if he can only gain possession of at least a drop of his blood. This is self-evident and the line cannot really be understood in any other way. Faust is to sign his name in his own blood, not because the devil is hostile to it, but because he desires to gain the mastery over it.

This passage is based on a remarkable insight, namely that he who wins power over a man’s blood wins power over the man himself. Blood is “a very singular fluid” because whenever there is a struggle between good and

evil in a man's life, it is really his blood that is being fought for.

All the things that have come down to us from popular legends and myths touching the life of man—our whole way of looking at them—will undergo a radical transformation in our time. The age is past when legends, fairy-tales and myths were regarded merely as the expressions of a childish folk-lore. Indeed the time has even gone by when a puerile scholarship could speak of them as a sort of folk “poetry”.

This so-called “poetic soul” of a people is nothing but the product of academic red-tape; for there is academic, as well as bureaucratic red-tape. Anyone who has insight into the soul of a people is well aware that he is not dealing with imaginative fiction or anything of that kind, but with something very much more profound, and that in point of fact the legends and fairy-tales of the various peoples give expression to wonderful powers and wonderful events.

If from the standpoint of modern spiritual investigation we ponder deeply on the old legends and myths, allowing those great, powerful pictures which have come down from primeval times to work upon us, we shall find, supposing we are equipped for our task by the methods of spiritual science, that these legends and myths are the expressions of a profound wisdom.

True, it may at first be asked how it came about that in a primitive state of development and with primitive mentality, unsophisticated men were able to picture the enigmas of the universe in the imagery of these legends and fairy-tales; and how it is that when we ponder over them we have before us in the form of pictures what spiritual investigation to-day is revealing. This is bound, at first, to surprise us. But when we probe more and more deeply

into the ways by which these fairy-tales and myths have come into being, all our surprise and our doubts will vanish. For we shall find in these legends not only what is termed a naïve and unsophisticated mentality but a wonderfully profound and wise expression of a primordial, truly wise conception of the world and of life.

Very much more can be learned by thoroughly investigating the background of the myths and legends than by absorbing the intellectual and experimental science of the present day. But to embark upon work of this kind the student must of course be conversant with spiritual-scientific methods of investigation. Everything that is contained in these legends and ancient views of the world about the blood is of importance because in those olden times there was a wisdom by means of which men understood the true significance of blood, that "very singular fluid" which is itself the flowing life of human beings.

We shall not enter to-day into the question of the source of that primeval wisdom. This subject will have to be touched upon at the end of the lecture; but the actual study of it will be dealt with in later lectures. To-day we shall consider the blood itself, its importance for man and for the process of civilisation and culture. We shall not approach it from the physiological or purely scientific point of view but rather from the vantage point of a spiritual conception of the world and of life. And the best approach will be by way of an ancient saying intimately connected with the original culture of ancient Egypt, where the priestly wisdom of Hermes flourished; it is a saying which constitutes a fundamental principle of all spiritual science and has become known as the "Hermetic maxim". It is the maxim: "As above, so below."

There are many superficial explanations of these words,

but the one we shall consider to-day is the following. It is quite obvious to spiritual science that the world to which man has primary access through his five senses does not represent the whole world, that it is in fact only the expression of a deeper world hidden behind it, namely, the spiritual world. In the sense of this Hermetic axiom, this spiritual world is called the world "above" and the world of the senses displayed around us, the existence of which we know through the medium of our senses and are able to investigate by means of our intellect, is the world "below"—the *expression* of the spiritual world. The spiritual investigator sees in this world of the senses nothing ultimate but rather a kind of physiognomy giving expression to a world of soul and spirit lying behind; it is just as when you gaze at a human countenance you should not stop at the form of the face and the movements on it, but you must pass as a matter of course from the physiognomy and the facial movements to the elements of soul and spirit which are expressed in them.

What every person does instinctively when confronted by any being possessed of a soul, the occultist or spiritual investigator does in respect of the entire world. The saying, "As above, so below" applied to the human being, would mean: The impulses contained in his soul come to expression in his face: coarseness of soul is expressed in a harsh, coarse countenance, inner happiness in a smiling one, suffering in teardrops.

Let me here apply the Hermetic axiom to the question: What actually constitutes wisdom? Spiritual science has always maintained that man's wisdom has something to do with experience, painful experience. Someone who is in the actual throes of suffering and pain may possibly make manifest a certain inner disharmony. A man who has

overcome the pain and suffering and bears their fruits within him will invariably tell you that through suffering he has gained some measure of wisdom. He says: The joys and pleasures of life, everything life can offer me in the way of satisfaction—all this I accept gratefully; but I am more loth to part with my past pain and suffering than with the pleasant gifts of life, for it is to my pain and suffering that I owe my wisdom. And so spiritual science has always recognised in wisdom something that may be called crystallized pain—pain that has been overcome and has been transformed into its opposite.

It is interesting that modern, more materialistic research, has recently arrived at the same conclusion. A short time ago a book very well worth reading was published on the “Mimicry of Thought”. It is not the work of a theosophist but of a student of nature and of the human psyche. The author endeavours to show how the inner life of man, his mode and quality of thinking, comes to expression in his physiognomy, and he points to the fact that there is always something in the facial expression of a thinker that is suggestive of what might be called “absorbed pain”.

So you see how, in striking confirmation of an immemorial principle of spiritual science, this principle is again brought to light in the more materialistic thought of our day. You will become more and more deeply aware of this and you will find that gradually, point by point, ancient wisdom is becoming accessible to the science of modern times.

Spiritual investigation, by its very nature, shows that everything surrounding us in the world—the mineral sub-structure, the plant covering, the animal world of our Earth—are to be regarded as the physiognomic expression, or the “below” of an “above”, of a spiritual life behind

them. From the standpoint of occultism or spiritual science, the sense-world can be rightly understood only if we also have knowledge of the "above", the spiritual prototype, the spiritual origins whence it has proceeded. For this reason we shall concern ourselves with what lies hidden behind the phenomenon of blood, with what has created in the blood a physiognomical expression in the sense-world. Once you have grasped this spiritual background of blood you will also realise how such knowledge is bound to influence our whole cultural life.

Questions and problems of great importance are pressing upon us to-day: questions concerning the education, not only of the young but of whole peoples. There are also the vital questions which the future holds in store for humanity and which cannot fail to be recognised by anyone who is attentive to the great social upheavals and demands that are everywhere becoming apparent, whether in the shape of Woman's Rights, the Labour Question, Pacifism or otherwise. All of them cause us anxiety. But they are clarified as soon as we recognise the spiritual reality lying behind blood.

Nobody would deny that this question is closely linked to that of race which—significantly—is again coming to the fore at the present time. But this question of race is one we can never understand until we understand the mysterious working of blood and the mingling of their blood by different peoples. And finally there is yet another question, which will become more and more insistent, the more we endeavour to give up aimlessly tinkering with it and move on towards a rationally conceived method. This is the question of colonisation, which crops up whenever civilised peoples come into contact with uncivilised peoples. The question is: To what extent are uncivilised

peoples capable of accepting and absorbing new forms of civilisation? How can a negro or a savage become really civilised? How should we behave towards them? And here deadly serious and far-reaching problems of life are involved, not just the feelings of a vague morality. Those who have no knowledge of the conditions governing the existence of a people, whether it be on the up-grade or down-grade of its evolution, whether one feature or another is conditioned by its blood, will not be able to find the right way to introduce culture to an alien people. All these issues are raised the moment the all-important question of blood is brought into focus.

You presumably all know what blood is in itself from the current teachings of natural science and you will be aware that in man and the higher animals, blood is practically fluid life.

You are aware that it is by way of the blood that the "inner man" is directed outward and that in the course of this process man's blood absorbs oxygen, which constitutes the very breath of life. Through the absorption of this oxygen the blood undergoes a renewal. Conversely, the blood which is offered to the instreaming oxygen is a kind of poison to the organism—a kind of destroyer and demolisher—but through the absorption of the oxygen the blue-red blood becomes transmuted by a process of combustion into red, life-giving fluid. This blood that finds its way to all parts of the body, depositing everywhere its particles of nourishment, has the task of directly assimilating the materials of the outer world, and of applying them, by the shortest method possible, to the nourishment of the body. Man and the higher animals have first to convey such foodstuffs into their blood; then, having formed the

blood, to absorb the oxygen from the air into it, and to build up and maintain the body by means of it.

Not without justification has an intelligent psychologist observed: "The blood with its circulation is like a second human being, and is related to the man of bone, muscle and nerve, like a kind of external world." For, as a matter of fact, the entire human being continually draws his sustenance from the blood, and at the same time discharges back into it that for which he has no use. A man's blood is therefore a true "double", ever bearing him company, from which he draws new strength, and to which he gives all that he can no longer use. "Man's fluid life" is therefore a good name to have given to the blood; for this constantly changing "singular fluid" is assuredly as important to man as is protoplasm to the lower organism.

The famous scientist, Ernst Haeckel, who has looked deeply into the operations of nature, in several of his popular works has rightly drawn attention to the fact that blood is really the latest comer in the organism. If we follow the development of the human embryo we find that the rudiments of bone and muscle are evolved long before the first tendency towards blood-formation becomes apparent. The ground-work for the formation of the blood, with all its attendant system of blood-vessels, appears very late there, and from this natural science has rightly concluded that the formation of blood occurred late in the evolution of the universe; that other powers, which were there first, had to be raised to the height of blood, so to speak, in order to effect at that height what was to be effected within the human being. Not until the human embryo has recapitulated all the earlier stages of human evolution, thus attaining to the condition in which the world was before the formation of blood, is it

ready to perform this crowning evolutionary act: the transformation and sublimation of all that had gone before into the “very singular fluid” which we call blood.

If we would study those mysterious laws of the spiritual universe which prevail behind the blood, we must occupy ourselves a little with some of the elementary concepts of Anthroposophy. These have often been set forth, and you will see that these elementary ideas of Anthroposophy are the “above”, and that this “above” expresses itself in the momentous laws of the blood—and also in those of the rest of life—as though in a physiognomy.

Those who are already well acquainted with the primary laws of Anthroposophy will, I trust, here permit a brief repetition of them for the benefit of others who are here for the first time. In any case the laws become more and more clear as we learn to apply them repeatedly to new and special cases. To those, of course, who know nothing about Anthroposophy, who have not yet familiarised themselves with these conceptions of life and of the universe, what I am about to say may seem little more than a string of words of which they can make nothing. But then, when words mean nothing, the fault does not always lie with the idea behind them. It was the witty Lichtenberg (if I may adapt a little), who said: “If a head and a book come into collision and the resulting sound is a hollow one, it is not necessarily the book’s fault!”

And so it is with our contemporaries when they pass judgment on anthroposophical truths. If these truths often sound like mere verbiage, the fault need not necessarily rest with Anthroposophy: those, however, who have found their way into these matters will know that behind all these delineations and these allusions to higher Beings, such

Beings do actually subsist, although they are not to be found in the world of the senses.

Our anthroposophical conception of the universe shows us that man, as far as he is revealed to our senses in the external world, as far as his shape and form go, is but a part of the whole human being, and that, in fact, there are many other parts behind the physical body. Man possesses this physical body in common with all the "lifeless" mineral objects around him. Over and above this, however, man possesses the etheric body—life-body. ("Etheric" is not here intended in the sense in which it is applied by physical science.) This etheric body—or life-body as it is sometimes called—far from being an invented hypothesis, is as distinctly visible to the developed spiritual senses of the occultist as are externally perceptible colours to the physical eye. This etheric body can actually be seen by the clairvoyant. It is the principle which calls the inorganic materials into life, and, summoning them from their lifeless condition, weaves them into the thread of life's garment. Do not imagine that this body is to the occultist merely something which he adds in thought to what is lifeless. That is what the natural scientists try to do! They try to complete what they see with the microscope by inventing something which they call the "life-principle".

This is not the standpoint of anthroposophical investigation. It has a fixed principle. It does not say: "Here I stand as a scientific engineer, just as I am. All there is in the world must conform to my present point of view. What I am unable to perceive has no existence!" That argument is about as sensible as if a blind man were to say colours are simply matters of fancy. The man who knows nothing about a thing is not in a position to judge of it, but only one who has experienced something of it.

Now man is in a state of evolution, and for this reason Anthroposophy says: "If you remain as you are you will not see the etheric body, and may certainly therefore speak of the 'boundaries of knowledge' and of '*Ignorabimus*'; but if you develop, and acquire, the necessary faculties for the cognition of spiritual things, you will no longer speak of the 'boundaries of knowledge', for these exist only as long as man has not developed his inner senses." It is for this reason that agnosticism constitutes so heavy a drag upon our civilisation; for it says: "Man is thus and thus, and being thus and thus he can know only this and that." To such a doctrine we reply: "Though he be thus and thus to-day, he has to become different, and when different he will then know something else."

So the second part of man is the etheric body, which he possesses in common with the plant kingdom.

The third part is the so-called astral body—a significant and beautiful name, the reason for which will be explained later. Those who are desirous of changing this name can have no idea of what is implied in it. To the astral body is assigned the task, both in man and in the animal, of raising the life-substance to the plane of feeling, so that in the life-substance not only fluids may move but there may also be expressed in it all we know as pain and pleasure, joy and grief. And here you have at once the essential difference between plant and animal, although there are transitional stages between the two.

A recent group of naturalists is of opinion that feeling in its literal sense should also be ascribed to plants. This, however, is nothing but playing with words. For although it is obvious that certain plants are so irritable that they "respond" to stimuli in their environment, yet that is not "feeling". In order that "feeling" may exist, an image of

some sort must arise within the creature as the reflex of that which produces the sensation. If, therefore, certain plants respond to external stimuli, this is no proof that the response attains to the level of a feeling, that is to say, that it is inwardly experienced. That which is inwardly experienced has its seat in the astral body. And so we come to see that what has reached the stage of animal existence consists of the physical body, the etheric body, and the astral body.

Man, however, towers above the animal through the possession of something quite distinct, and thoughtful people have at all times been aware in what this superiority consists. It is indicated in what Jean Paul says of himself in his autobiography. He relates that he could quite well remember the day when he stood as a child in the courtyard of his parents' house, and the thought suddenly flashed across his mind that he was an Ego, a being capable of inwardly saying "I" to itself; and he tells us that this made a profound impression upon him.

All merely external psychology overlooks the most important point here. I will ask you, therefore, to follow me for a few moments in a train of thought that is rather subtle but very relevant. In the whole of human speech there is one small word which differs *in toto* from all the rest. Each one of you can name the things around you; each one can call a table a table, and a chair a chair. But there is one word, one name, which you cannot apply to anything except its owner, and this is the little word "I". None can address another as "I". This "I" has to sound forth from the inmost soul itself; it is the name which only the soul itself can apply to itself. Every other person is a "you" to me, and I am a "you" to him. All religions have recognised this "I" as the expression of that principle in the soul which enables it to utter its own inmost being, its divine nature.

Here, then, begins that which can never penetrate through the outer senses, which can never be meaningfully named from without, but which must sound forth from the inmost being. Here begins that monologue, that soliloquy of the soul whereby the divine Self announces its presence when the path lies clear for the entry of the Spirit into the human soul.

In the religions of earlier civilisations, among the ancient Hebrews, for instance, this was known as "the unutterable Name of God", and whatever interpretation modern philology may choose to place upon it, the ancient Jewish name of God has no other meaning than what is expressed in our word "I". A thrill passed through those assembled when the "Name of the Unknown God" was pronounced by the Initiates, when they dimly perceived what was meant by those words reverberating through the temple: "I am that I am."

In this word is expressed the fourth principle of human nature, the one that man possesses alone among his terrestrial fellow-creatures; and this "I" in its turn encloses and develops within itself the seeds of higher stages of humanity.

We can take only a passing glance at what in the future will be evolved through this fourth principle. Man consists of a physical body, an etheric body, an astral body, and the Ego, his proper inner Life; and within this inner Life are the rudiments of three further stages of development that will spring from the blood. These three are Spirit-Self, Life-Spirit and Spirit-Man; the Spirit-Self as distinguished from the bodily self; the Life-Spirit; and the veritable Spirit-Man, a far-off ideal to the man of to-day, the tiny seed now latent within him, but destined in future ages to reach perfection.

We have seven colours in the rainbow, seven tones in the

scale, seven series of atomic weights and seven grades in the scale of the human being; and these are again divided into four lower and three higher grades.

Let us now attempt to obtain a clear insight into the way in which this higher spiritual triad achieves a physiognomical expression in the lower quaternary, and how it appears to us in the world of the senses. Take, in the first place, that which has crystallized into form as man's physical body. This he possesses in common with the whole of what is called "lifeless" nature. When we talk in the anthroposophical sense of the physical body, we do not really mean what the eye actually beholds but rather that combination of forces which has built up the physical body, the activity content which exists behind the visible form.

Now let us think of a plant. This is a being possessed of an etheric body, which raises physical substance to life—in other words, it converts that substance into living sap. What is it that transforms the so-called lifeless forces into the living sap? We call it the etheric body, and the etheric body does precisely the same work in animals and in men; it evokes that which has a merely material existence into a living configuration, a living form.

This etheric body is, in its turn, permeated by an astral body. And what does the astral body do? It leads the substance that has been set in motion to experience the material circulation of the fluids *inwardly*, so that external movement becomes reflected in inward experience.

We have now arrived at the point where we are able to comprehend man as far as his place in the animal kingdom is concerned. All the substances of which man is composed, such as oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, sulphur, phosphorus, etc., are to be found outside in inanimate nature also. If that which the etheric body has transformed into living

substance is to have inner experiences, if it is to create inner reflections of what takes place externally, then the etheric body must be permeated by what we have come to know as the astral body, for it is the astral body that gives rise to sensation. But at this stage the astral body calls forth sensation in one particular way only. The etheric body changes the inorganic substances into vital fluids, and the astral body in its turn transforms this vital substance into sentient substance; but—and this I ask you specially to notice—what is it that a being with no more than these three bodies is capable of feeling? It feels only itself, its own life-processes; it leads a life that is confined within itself.

This is a most interesting fact and one of extraordinary importance for us to bear in mind. If you look at one of the lower animals, what do you find it has accomplished? It has transformed inanimate substance into living substance, and living substance into sensitive substance; and sensitive substance can be found only where there exist the rudiments, at all events, of what at a later stage appears as a structured nervous system.

Thus we have inanimate substance, living substance and substance permeated by nerves capable of sensation. If you look at a crystal you have to recognise it primarily as the expression of certain natural laws that prevail in the external world in the so-called lifeless kingdom. No crystal could be formed without the whole of surrounding nature. No single link can be severed from the chain of the cosmos and set apart by itself. And just as little can you separate from his environment man, who if he were lifted to an altitude of even a few miles above the Earth must inevitably die. Just as man is only conceivable here in the place where he is, where the appropriate forces are combined in him, so is it too with regard to the crystal; whoever views a

crystal rightly will see in it a picture of the whole of nature, indeed of the whole cosmos. What Cuvier said is actually the case, namely, that a competent anatomist will be able to tell to what sort of animal any given bone has belonged, every animal having its own particular kind of bone-formation.

Thus the whole cosmos lives in the form of a crystal. In the same way the whole cosmos is expressed in the living substance of a single being. The fluids coursing through it are, at the same time, a little world, and a counterpart of the great world. And when substance has become capable of sensation, what then dwells in the sensations of the most rudimentary creatures? Their sensations mirror the cosmic laws, so that each separate living creature senses within itself microcosmically the whole macrocosm. The sentient life of a simple organism is thus an image of the life of the universe, just as the crystal is an image of its form. The consciousness of such living creatures is, of course, very dim. But its vagueness is counterbalanced by its far greater range, for the whole cosmos glimmers in the faint consciousness of an elementary being. In man there is only a more complicated structure of the same three bodies that are found in the simplest sensitive living creature.

Take man—without considering his blood—take him as a being composed of the substance of the surrounding physical world and containing, like the plant, certain saps or juices which transform all that into living substance, and in which a nervous system gradually becomes organised. This first nervous system is the “sympathetic” system, and in the case of man it extends along the entire length of the spine, to which it is attached by minute threads on either side. It has also at each side a series of nodes, from which threads branch off to different parts, such as the lungs, the

digestive organs, and so on. This sympathetic nervous system betokens in the first place, the life of sensation just described. But man's consciousness does not extend to a sufficient depth to enable him to follow the cosmic processes mirrored by these nerves. They are a medium of expression, and just as human life is formed from the surrounding cosmic world, so is this cosmic world reflected again in the sympathetic nervous system. These nerves live a dim, inward life, but if man were only able to dive down into his sympathetic system, and to lull his higher nervous system to sleep, he would behold, as in a state of luminous life, the silent workings of tremendous cosmic laws.

In past times people were possessed of a clairvoyant faculty that is now superseded but may still be experienced when, by special processes, the activity of the higher system of nerves is suspended, thus setting free the lower or subliminal consciousness. At such times man lives in that system of nerves which, in its own particular way, is a reflection of the surrounding world.

Certain lower animals indeed still retain this state of consciousness, and though it is dim and indistinct, it is essentially more far-reaching than present-day human consciousness. A farspread world is reflected there as dim inward life, not merely a small section of it such as is perceived by contemporary man. But in the case of man there is something else. When evolution has proceeded so far that the sympathetic nervous system has been developed, so that the cosmos is reflected in it, the evolving being again at this point opens itself outwards; to the sympathetic system is added the spinal cord. The system of brain and spinal cord then leads to those organs through which connection is established with the outer world.

Man, having progressed thus far, is no longer called upon

to act merely as a mirror for reflecting the primordial laws of cosmic evolution, but a relation is set up between the reflection itself and the external world. The conjunction of sympathetic system and higher nervous system is expressive of a change that has taken place beforehand in the astral body. The latter no longer merely lives the cosmic life in a state of dull consciousness, but it adds thereto its own peculiar inward existence. The sympathetic system enables a being to sense what is taking place outside it; the higher system of nerves enables it to perceive, to become aware of, what happens within it, and the highest form of the nervous system, such as is possessed by mankind in general at the present stage of evolution, takes back from the more highly developed astral body material for the creation of images, or representations, of the outer world. Man has lost the power of experiencing the former dim, primitive pictures of the external world, but, on the other hand, he is now conscious of his inner life, and out of this inner life he forms, at a higher stage, a new world of images in which it is true, only a small portion of the outer world is reflected, but in a clearer and more perfect manner than before.

Hand in hand with this transformation another change takes place at a higher stage of development. The transformation thus begun extends from the astral body to the etheric body. As the etheric body in the process of its transformation evokes the astral body, and as to the sympathetic nervous system is added the system of the brain and spine, so, too, does that which—after adopting the lower circulation of fluids—has grown out of and become free from the etheric body, now transmute these lower fluids into what we know as blood.

Blood is therefore an expression of the individualised

etheric body, just as the brain and spinal cord are the expression of the individualised astral body. And it is this individualising which brings about that which lives as the Ego, or "I".

Having followed man thus far in his evolution, we find that we have to do with a chain consisting of five links:

1. physical body;

2. etheric body;

3. astral body;

or

1. the inorganic, neutral, physical forces;

2. the vital fluids which are also found in plants;

3. the lower, sympathetic nervous system;

4. the higher astral body which has been evolved from the lower one and which finds its expression in the spinal cord and the brain;

5. the principle that individualises the etheric body.

Just as the last two principles have been individualised, so will the first principle through which lifeless matter enters the human body, serving to build it up, also become individualised; but in our present-day humanity we find only the first rudiments of this transformation.

We have seen how the external formless substances pass into the human body, and how the etheric body turns these materials into living forms; how, further, the astral body fashions pictures of the external world, how this reflection of the external world resolves itself into inner experiences, and how this inner life then reproduces from within itself pictures of the outer world.

Now when this metamorphosis extends to the etheric body, blood is formed. The blood-vessels, together with the heart, are the expression of the transformed etheric

body, in the same way that the spinal cord and the brain express the transformed astral body. Just as by means of the brain the outer world is internalised, so also by means of the blood this inner world is transformed into outer expression in the body of man. I shall have to speak in similes in order to describe to you the complicated processes which have now to be taken into account.

The blood receives those pictures of the outside world which the brain has internalised, transforms them into living constructive forces, and with them builds up the present human body. Blood is therefore the material that builds up the human body. And we see going on before our eyes a process in which the blood extracts from its cosmic environment the highest substance it can possibly obtain, viz., oxygen, which renews the blood and supplies it with fresh life. In this manner our blood is caused to open itself to the outer world.

We have thus followed the path from the external world to the inner world, and also back again from that inner world to the outer world. There are now two possibilities. We see that blood originates when man confronts the external world as an independent being, when out of the sensations which the external world has become in him, he fashions forms and images of his own accord, thus himself becoming creative, and making it possible for the Ego, the individual Will, to come into life. A being in whom this process had not yet taken place would not be able to say "I". In the blood lies the principle for the development of the Ego. The "I" can be expressed only when a being is itself able to form within itself the pictures it has engendered from the outer world. An Ego-being must be capable of taking in the external world and engendering it again within itself.

Were man endowed only with a brain, he would only be able to reproduce pictures of the outer world within himself, and to experience them inwardly; he would then only be able to say: "The outer world is reflected in me as in a mirror." If, however, he is able to build up this reflection of the external world into a new form, then this form is no longer merely the external world, it is "I". A creature possessed of a sympathetic nervous system only mirrors the world that surrounds it; it does not apprehend that outer world as itself, as its inner life. A being possessed of a spinal cord and a brain senses the mirroring as its inner life. But when a creature possesses blood, it *experiences* its inner life as its own form. Through the blood, assisted by the oxygen of the external world, the individual body is formed according to the pictures of the inner life. This process of formation comes to expression as perception of the "I", or Ego.

The Ego points in two directions, and the blood expresses this fact externally. Its vision is directed inwards; its will is turned outwards. The forces of the blood are directed inwards; they build up the inner man, and again they are turned outwards to the oxygen of the external world. This is why, on going to sleep, man sinks into unconsciousness; he sinks into that which his consciousness can experience in the blood. When, however, he again opens his eyes to the outer world, his blood takes into its formative process the pictures engendered with the help of the brain and the senses. Thus the blood stands midway, as it were, between the inner world of pictures and the outer world of living forms. This role becomes clear to us when we study two phenomena, viz., heredity—the relationship between conscious beings—and experience in the world of external events. Heredity, or descent, places us where we

stand by virtue of our blood. A person is born of a connection, a race, a tribe, a line of ancestors, and what these ancestors have bequeathed to him is expressed in his blood. In the blood is gathered together, as it were, all that the material past has constructed in man; but in the blood there is also being formed all that is being prepared for the future.

When, therefore, man temporarily suppresses his higher consciousness, when he is in a hypnotic state, or one of somnambulism, or when he is in a condition of atavistic clairvoyance, then he descends to far deeper consciousness, one wherein he becomes dreamily cognisant of the great cosmic laws, but nevertheless perceives them much more clearly than the most vivid dreams of ordinary sleep. At such times the activity of his brain is in abeyance, and during states of the deepest somnambulism this applies also to the spinal cord. The man experiences the activities of his sympathetic nervous system; that is to say, in a dim and hazy fashion he senses the life of the entire cosmos. At such times the blood no longer brings to expression those pictures of the inner life that are produced by means of the brain; instead, it presents those which the outer world has built into it. Now, however, we must bear in mind that the forces of his ancestors have helped to make him what he is. Just as he inherits the shape of his nose from an ancestor, so does he inherit the form of his whole body. At such times of suppressed consciousness he senses his ancestors within him, even as during his waking consciousness he receives through his senses the images of the outer world; that is to say, his ancestors are audible in his blood, and at such a time he dimly takes part in their remote life.

Everything in the world is in a state of evolution, including human consciousness. Man has not always had the consciousness he now possesses; when we go back to the

times of our earliest ancestors, we find a consciousness of a very different kind. At the present time man in his waking life perceives external things through the agency of his senses and forms representations of them. These representations of the external world act on his blood. Everything, therefore, which he has received as the result of sense-experience, lives and works in his blood; his memory is stored with these experiences of his senses. On the other hand, the man of to-day is no longer conscious of what he possesses in his inward bodily life by inheritance from his ancestors. He knows nothing of the forms of his inner organs; but in earlier times this was different. There then lived within the blood not only what the senses had received from the external world, but also what is contained within the bodily form; and as that bodily form was inherited from his ancestors, man sensed their life within himself.

If we think of a heightened form of this consciousness, we shall have some idea of how this was also expressed in a corresponding form of memory. A person experiencing no more than what he perceives through his senses, remembers no more than the events so experienced. He can only be aware of such things as he may have experienced in this way since his childhood. But with prehistoric man it was different. Such a man sensed what was within him, and as this inner experience was the result of heredity, he passed through the experiences of his ancestors by means of his inner faculty. He remembered not only his own childhood but also the experiences of his ancestors. This life of his ancestors was, in fact, ever present in the pictures which his blood received, for, incredible as it may seem to the materialistic ideas of the present day, there was at one time a form of consciousness by means of which men con-

sidered not only their own sense-perceptions as their own experiences, but also the experiences of their forefathers. In those times, when they said, "I have experienced such and such a thing," they were alluding not only to what had happened to themselves personally, but also to the experiences of their ancestors, for they could remember them.

This earlier consciousness was, it is true, of a very dim kind, very hazy as compared to man's waking consciousness at the present day. It partook more of the nature of a vivid dream, but on the other hand it embraced far more than does our present consciousness. The son felt himself connected with his father and his grandfather as one "I", because he felt their experiences as if they were his own. And because man was possessed of this consciousness, because he lived not only in his own personal world, but because within him there dwelt also the consciousness of preceding generations, in naming himself he included in that name everyone belonging to his ancestral line. Father, son, grandson, etc., designated by one name that which was common to them all, that which passed through them all; in short, a person felt himself to be merely a member of an entire line. This sensation was a true and actual one.

We must now enquire how it was that this form of consciousness was changed. It came about through a cause well known to occult history. If you go back into the past, you will find that there is one particular moment that stands out in the history of each nation or people. It is the moment at which a new phase of civilisation begins, the moment when old traditions cease, when it loses the wisdom that was handed down through the generations by way of the blood. The various peoples possess a consciousness of all this and it is expressessed in their legends.

In earlier times, tribes held aloof from each other, and

the individual members of families intermarried. You will find this to have been the case with all races and with all peoples; and it was an important moment for humanity when this principle was broken through, when alien blood was introduced, and when marriage between relations was replaced by marriage with strangers, when endogamy gave place to exogamy. Endogamy preserves the blood of the generations; it permits of the same blood flowing in the separate members as flows for generations through the entire tribe or the entire people. Exogamy inoculates man with new blood, and this breaking-down of the tribal principle, this mixing of blood which sooner or later takes place among all peoples, signifies the birth of intellect, of external understanding.

The important thing to bear in mind here is that in olden times there was a hazy clairvoyance from which the myths and legends originated. This clairvoyance could exist in the inbred blood, just as our present-day consciousness comes about owing to the mingling of blood. The birth of logical thought, the birth of the intellect, was simultaneous with the advent of exogamy. Surprising as this may seem, it is nevertheless true. It is a fact which will be substantiated more and more by external investigation; indeed, the initial steps have already been taken.

But this mingling of blood which comes about through exogamy is also the thing that obliterates the clairvoyance of earlier days, in order that humanity may evolve to a higher stage of development; and just as the person who has passed through the stages of occult development regains this clairvoyance, and transmutes it into a new form, so has our waking consciousness of the present day been evolved out of that dim and hazy clairvoyance which obtained in times of old.

At the present time everything in a man's environment to which he gives himself expresses itself in his blood; hence the environment forms the inner in accordance with the outer. In the case of primitive man it was that which was contained within the body that was more fully expressed in the blood. In those early times the recollection of ancestral experiences was inherited, and, along with this, good or evil tendencies. But when blood became mixed through exogamy, this close connection with his ancestors was severed, and man began to live his own personal life. He began to regulate his moral tendencies according to what he experienced in his own personal life. Thus in an unmixed blood is expressed the power of the ancestral life, and in a mixed blood the power of personal experience.

The myths and legends tell of these things. They say: "That which has power over thy blood has power over thee." This traditional power ceased when it could no longer work upon the blood, because the latter's capacity for responding to such power was extinguished by the admixture of alien blood. This statement holds good to the widest extent. Whatever power it is that wishes to obtain the mastery over a man, that power must work upon him in such a way that the effects are expressed in his blood. If, therefore, an evil power would influence a man, it must be able to influence his blood. This is the deep and spiritual meaning of the quotation from *Faust*. This is why the representative of the evil principle says: "Sign with thy blood thy name to the pact. If once I have thy name written in thy blood, then I can hold thee by that which above all sways a man; then shall I have drawn thee over to myself." For whoever has mastery over the blood is master of the man himself, or of the man's Ego.

When two groups of people come into contact, as is the

case in colonisation, then those who are acquainted with the conditions of evolution are able to foretell whether or no an alien form of civilisation can be assimilated by the others. Take, for example, a people that has grown out of its environment, into whose blood this environment has built itself, and try to graft upon such a people a new form of civilisation. The thing is impossible. This is the reason why certain aboriginal peoples have to go under, as soon as colonists come to their particular parts of the world.

It is from this point of view that the question will have to be considered, and the notion that changes are capable of being forced upon all and sundry will in time cease to be upheld, for it is useless to demand from blood more than it can endure.

Modern science has discovered that if the blood of one animal is mixed with that of another not akin to it, the blood of the one is fatal to that of the other. This has been known to occultism for ages. If you mingle the blood of human beings with that of the lower apes, the result is destructive to the species, since the one is too far removed from the other. Whereas, if you mingle the blood of man with that of the higher apes, death does not ensue. Just as this mingling of the blood of different species of animals brings about actual death when the types are too remote, so too the ancient clairvoyance of undeveloped man was killed when his blood was mixed with the blood of others who did not belong to the same stock. The entire intellectual life of to-day is the outcome of the mingling of blood, and the time is not far distant when people will study the influence this had upon human life, and when investigations are once more conducted from this standpoint they will be able to trace it back in the history of humanity.

We have seen that blood to blood in the case of remotely

connected animal species, kills: blood to blood in the case of more closely allied species, does not kill. The physical organism of man survives when strange blood comes in contact with strange blood, but his clairvoyant faculty perished under the influence of this mixing of blood, or exogamy.

Man is so constituted that when blood mingles with blood which is not too far removed in evolution, the intellect is born. By this means the original clairvoyance stemming from the animal organism was destroyed, and a new form of consciousness took its place.

Thus in the higher stage of human development we find something similar to what happens at a lower stage in the animal kingdom. In the latter, strange blood kills strange blood. In the human kingdom strange blood kills that which is intimately bound up with kindred blood, viz., the dim, dreamy clairvoyance. Our everyday objective consciousness is therefore the outcome of a destructive process. In the course of evolution the kind of mental life due to endogamy has been destroyed, but in its stead exogamy has given birth to the intellect, to the wideawake consciousness of the present day.

That which is able to live in a man's blood is that which lives in his Ego. Just as the physical body is the expression of the physical principle, as the etheric body is the expression of the vital fluids and their systems and the astral body of the nervous system, so is the blood the expression of the "I" or Ego. Physical *principle*, etheric body and astral body are the "above"; blood and Ego are the "in between"; physical body, vital system and nervous system are the "below". Whoever, therefore would master a man must first master that man's blood. This must be borne in mind if any advance is to be made in practical life. For example,

the individuality of a people may be destroyed if, when colonising, you demand from its blood more than it can bear, for in the blood the Ego is expressed. Beauty and truth possess a man only when they possess his blood.

Mephistopheles obtains possession of Faust's blood because he desires to rule his Ego. Hence we may say that the sentence which has formed the theme of the present lecture was drawn from profound depths of knowledge, for truly

"Blood is a very singular fluid."

COMPLETE EDITION

of the works of Rudolf Steiner in the original German. Published by the *Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung, Dornach, Switzerland*, by whom all rights are reserved.

General Plan (abbreviated):

A.

- I. Works written between the years 1883 and 1925.
- II. Essays and articles written between 1882 and 1925.
- III. Letters, drafts, manuscripts, fragments, verses, meditative sayings, inscriptions, etc.

B. LECTURES

- I. Public Lectures.
- II. Lectures to Members of the Anthroposophical Society on general anthroposophical subjects.
Lectures to Members on the history of the Anthroposophical Movement and Anthroposophical Society.
- III. Lectures and Courses on special branches of work:
Art: Eurythmy, Speech and Drama, Music, Visual Arts, History of Art.
Education
Medicine and Therapy
Science
Sociology and the Threefold Social Order
Lectures given to Workmen at the Goetheanum

The total number of lectures amounts to some six thousand, shorthand reports of which are available in the case of the great majority.

C. REPRODUCTIONS and SKETCHES

Paintings, drawings, coloured diagrams, Eurythmy forms, etc.

When the Edition is complete the total number of volumes, each of a considerable size, will amount to several hundreds. A full and detailed *Bibliographical Survey*, with subjects, dates and places where the lectures were given, is available.

All the volumes can be obtained from the Rudolf Steiner Press, as well as directly from the *Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung* (address as above).

3/6d.

SBN 85440 186 5

Wg-CTN-323